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PARTNERS IN CRIME: POLICE ADVISORS
AND THE DRAMATURGES OF *POLIZEIRUF 110* IN THE GDR

In June 1971, the GDR's new leader Erich Honecker publicly admitted that the state television schedules gave rise to 'eine bestimmte Langeweile'.¹ Two years after the advent of colour television, Deutscher Fernsehfunk was patently failing to win over a broad domestic audience. Its news and entertainment programmes were no match for broadcasts from the Federal Republic, which were accessible in all but a few isolated pockets of the GDR. Yet in the very same month that Honecker made his uncharacteristically frank admission, Deutscher Fernsehfunk launched a new crime series, *Polizeiruf 110*, whose viewing figures came to average half the total population of the GDR.² In the Ministerium des Innern, the Abteilung Presse/Information was keen to exploit the new opportunities that the series offered:

Mit 16 Stunden Serienproduktion hat die Kriminalpolizei die fast einmalige
Gelegenheit, viele Millionen Zuschauer mit den Aufgaben der Vorbeugung und

¹ Erich Honecker, 'Bericht des Zentralkomitees an den VIII. Parteitag der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands', *Neues Deutschland* (East Berlin), 16 June 1971, pp. 3-9 (p. 9).

² Ingrid Brück, Andrea Guder, Reinhold Viehoff, and Karin Wehn, *Der deutsche Fernsehkrimi: Ein Programm- und Produktionsgeschichte von den Anfängen bis heute* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), p. 64.

Bekämpfung der Kriminalität vertraut zu machen, sie zu aktivieren und die Tätigkeit der Kriminalisten attraktiv darzustellen. Das ist ein Politikum!³

When I interviewed Werner Krecek, a former chief dramaturge of *Polizeiruf 110*, he emphasized that he and his colleagues shared the didactic aims of the police and their desire to support the state, except right at the end of the GDR.⁴ This apparent coincidence of motives suggests that GDR claims of a ‘socialist partnership’ between television dramaturges and their police advisors merit closer investigation than post-reunification scepticism, or a focus on censorship and control, might suggest.

Despite its status as the GDR’s most successful entertainment series, and as the only GDR series that is regularly re-broadcast on television today, *Polizeiruf 110* has received relatively little critical attention. Such analyses as do exist are based primarily on the finished episodes or on interviews with the television producers, and only two published studies – by Andrea Guder and Torsten Barthel – take account of the substantial holdings in the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv.⁵ Guder provides a clear description of the structures and processes

³ Abt. Presse/Information, ‘Leitfaden für die Aussprache mit dem Leiter der Hauptabteilung Kriminalpolizei zur Verbesserung der Öffentlichkeitsarbeit am 27.11.1971’, 24 November 1971, Bundesarchiv (henceforth BArch) DO1 05.0/43165.

⁴ Personal interview with Dr Werner Krecek, 4 December 2013.

⁵ See Regina Rauxloh, ‘Goodies and Baddies: The Presentation of German Police and Criminals in East and West Television Drama’, *German Law Journal*, 6 (2005), 981-1000; Peter Hoff, *Polizeiruf 110: Filme, Fälle, Fakten* (Berlin: Das Neue Berlin, 2001); Andrea Guder, *Genosse Hauptmann auf Verbrecherjagd: Der Krimi in Film und Fernsehen der DDR* (Bonn: ArCult Media, 2003), pp. 112-43 and 161-84; Torsten Barthel, *Das Fernsehen als*

underpinning the production of *Polizeiruf 110* in the GDR, and she uses examples from assessments of screenplays to indicate how police advisors sought to implement their vision of crime and detection under socialism. Barthel adopts the same approach in his Master's dissertation, although his use of the archival material is less substantial. Their research provides a valuable starting-point, but there is much more that can be gleaned from the archive's holdings, as they offer an opportunity to examine how the relationship between two major GDR institutions functioned over an eighteen-year period. This article shows how the correspondence between television dramaturges and police advisors can be used to explore discourses and processes of control and collaboration, agency and participation, and thus to provide a more rounded understanding of the working relationship. It also broadens the focus to include detailed consideration of records from the Bundesarchiv, which feature only occasionally in Guder's discussion and are barely mentioned by Barthel. These records include internal Ministry communications and reports filed to the Ministry by local police officers who assisted on film shoots. Unlike the correspondence in the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, the communications in the Bundesarchiv were never intended to be seen by television dramaturges. They provide new perspectives on how the Ministry, and individuals occupying different positions in its hierarchy, conceived of the 'partnership' with the producers of *Polizeiruf 110*.

Socialist collaboration: from suspicion to sociability

By the 1960s, fiction, films, and television series about crime were an established part of GDR culture. Debates had thus moved on considerably since the 1950s, when literary critics

Mittel der Staatskommunikation und der ideologischen Apologetik in der DDR am Beispiel der Krimiserie 'Polizeiruf 110' (Munich: GRIN, 2009).

had argued over whether GDR culture could include crime fiction, and when defenders of the *Krimi* had sought to justify it either as a bulwark against harmful bourgeois influences or as a bridge to socialist realist literature.⁶ Whilst television series launched in the 1950s had tended to distance crimes from the GDR, either by locating them in earlier periods of German history or by suggesting that they had been ‘imported’ from the Federal Republic, episodes of *Blaulicht* (1958-1968) made after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 featured crimes that originated in the GDR.⁷ By the time *Polizeiruf 110* was launched in 1971, television dramaturges were already accustomed to working with so-called ‘gesellschaftliche Partner’, and in the case of *Blaulicht* this meant the Hauptabteilung Kriminalpolizei (HA K) of the Ministerium des Innern. The Ministry was keen to continue the collaboration: a document produced by its Politische Verwaltung in 1966 indicates that the Ministry had been arguing for a new crime series and that the HA K had supplied material for it. The document even names the series as *Polizeiruf 110*, showing that the series was under discussion at a much earlier stage than the existing accounts imply.⁸ The launch could hardly have come at a more

⁶ See Reinhard Hillich, ‘Damm – Brücke – Fluß: Sachdienliche Hinweise zur Diskussion über Kriminalliteratur in der DDR’, in *Tatbestand: Ansichten zur Kriminalliteratur in der DDR 1947-1986*, ed. by Hillich (East Berlin: Akademie, 1989), pp. 9-36, especially pp. 14 and 21.

⁷ For an informative account of the history of crime drama on GDR film and television, see Guder, *Genosse Hauptmann auf Verbrecherjagd*, pp. 203-04. The phrase ‘das importierte Verbrechen’ was coined by Peter Hoff, ‘Krimi-Kniffe: Über einige Tendenzen der Fernsehreihe *Polizeiruf 110* und andere’, *FF dabei*, 23-29 November 1981, pp. 6-7 (p. 6).

⁸ Politische Verwaltung, ‘Material zum Komplex Deutscher Fernsehfunk’, 29 August 1966, BArch DO1 05.0/41543. See Guder, *Genosse Hauptmann auf Verbrecherjagd*, p. 113; Hoff,

auspicious time: the first episode was broadcast on 27 June 1971, just eleven days after Honecker's call for more variety in the GDR's entertainment schedules. He had delivered this statement at the Eighth Party Conference of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), which had taken a more conciliatory line towards artists, contrasting sharply with the harsh criticisms expressed at the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Central Committee in 1965. The need for a popular successor to *Blaulicht* was all the more pressing, as West German television had started to broadcast its popular new crime series *Tatort* in November 1970.

Despite these auspicious circumstances, by February 1972 the relationship between television dramaturges and Ministry officials was in crisis. It seemed to the Ministry's Abteilung Presse/Information that the chief dramaturge was jealously guarding his turf: allowing police advisors to have a say only on criminological matters, not artistic ones. The department prepared a memorandum designed to serve as a basis for a meeting between representatives of the Ministry and Horst Pehnert, the Deputy Chair of the Staatliches Komitee für Fernsehen. The memorandum accused the chief dramaturge – who was not present at the meeting – of double standards, claiming that he resisted the Ministry's input only then to blame problems in quality on its high-handed interference. It warned: 'Dieses Abwälzen der Verantwortung auf andere und die mangelnde Bereitschaft, auch im künstlerischen Bereich zusammenzuarbeiten, ist für echte, sozialistische Partnerschaftsbeziehungen hemmend.'⁹ Since February 1971, the HA K had been

Polizeiruf 110, p. 36; *Gesetzesbrecher und Genossen: Der Krimi im DDR-Fernsehen*, dir.

Dagmar Wittmers and Katrin Löschburg (ORB and Adolf-Grimme-Institut, 1991), on VHS.

⁹ Abt. Presse/Information, 'Information über die gegenwärtige Lage bei der Verwirklichung der Aufgaben zur Schaffung wirkungsvoller Kriminalserien im Bereich Unterhaltende

complaining about problems with collaboration on another new crime series, provisionally titled *VP 70* but eventually broadcast as *Täter unbekannt*. The HA K had claimed that the dramaturges did not keep to prior agreements, that advice provided by the HA K on the exposés was not being heeded in the screenplays, and that not all of the screenplays had been sent to the department before filming started.¹⁰ In February 1972 the Abteilung Presse/Information repeated some of these claims, this time with reference to *Polizeiruf 110*, and argued that the delay in submitting screenplays for scrutiny was a tactical move, designed to limit interference. It also objected to the dramaturges' choice of screenwriters, claiming that they included individuals 'die wegen ihrer politischen Unzuverlässigkeit niemals Partner des Ministeriums des Innern werden können'.¹¹ The Ministry's catalogue of complaints came as a surprise to Pehnert: according to the HA K's note of the meeting, he said that he had always assumed that collaboration between the Ministry and dramaturges worked well.¹² He

Dramatik des Fernsehens der DDR', 18 February 1972, BArch DO1 05.0/34166. As the allegations against the chief dramaturge are unsubstantiated, his name has been omitted here.

¹⁰ HA K Offz. für ÖA, 'Vorschlag für die inhaltlichen Schwerpunkte der mündlichen Stellungnahme der Vertreter der Hauptabteilung Kriminalpolizei zur Produktion der Kriminalserie *VP 70* gegenüber dem DFF', 12 February 1971, BArch DO1 05.0/41544.

¹¹ Abt. Presse/Information, 'Information über die gegenwärtige Lage', 18 February 1972, BArch DO1 05.0/34166. The phrase 'politische Unzuverlässigkeit' covered a broad range of transgressions: in this case, the Ministry objected to the author because he had allegedly committed plagiarism.

¹² HA K, 'Niederschrift über die beim Stellvertreter des Vorsitzenden des Staatlichen Komitees für Fernsehen, Gen. *Pehnert*, am Montag, dem 13.-03.1972 von 10.00 – 11.00 Uhr geführten Aussprache', 14 March 1972, BArch DO1 05.0/34166.

reportedly agreed with the Ministry that the chief dramaturge was responsible for the problems, and Guder cites the Ministry's criticisms without questioning or commenting on them.¹³ However, it is worth noting that this dramaturge had had substantial experience of working on crime series, and in 1966 he had reportedly reminded all directors in his department about the need to cultivate a close collaboration with the Ministry's Politische Verwaltung and other expert bodies.¹⁴ This apparent discrepancy reminds us that the Ministry's explanation remains just one interpretation of the situation.

What the Ministry's comments do indicate is just how difficult it was to establish a collaborative relationship in a censorial context. Even though no episodes or material had been banned, individuals in each institution could interpret actions or omissions as either a hostile exercise of power or as counter-censorship strategies, depending on their perspective. In the 1966 report cited above, the Politische Verwaltung claimed that it had taken time to overcome reservations on the part of television workers about the Ministry's involvement in cultural production:

Bei einigen DFF-Mitarbeitern verschiedener Ebenen anfangs bestehende Vorbehalte, dergestalt, das Ministerium des Innern wolle gewissermaßen seine Dienstvorschriften verfilmt sehen, eine Art 'Zensur' ausüben usw. usf., wurden im Prozeß der gegenseitigen Zusammenarbeit systematisch abgebaut.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid. See Guder, *Genosse Hauptmann auf Verbrecherjagd*, pp. 162-63, who bases her account on the document cited in notes 9 and 11 above.

¹⁴ Politische Verwaltung, 'Material zum Komplex', 29 August 1966, BArch DO1 05.0/41543.

¹⁵ Ibid.

In both cases, the spectre of a dichotomy between *Geist* and *Macht* initially loomed large: awareness of the Ministry's potential power as a censor created an atmosphere of mutual distrust, even before any major disagreements over the content of television programmes had occurred. This lack of trust is palpable in a paper that the Abteilung Presse/Information produced in November 1971, which emphasized the need to put all agreements and assessments relating to *Polizeiruf 110* in writing, to establish who was responsible for what, and to react *immediately* (emphasis in the original) to any deviation from the agreed line.¹⁶

Yet the archives reveal another, more prosaic reason why the relationship between the Ministry and the dramaturges was in crisis – a reason that Guder does not actually consider.¹⁷ At the very same time as the Abteilung Presse/Information suspected the chief dramaturge of trying to limit interference from the Ministry, the HA K was being overwhelmed by requests for help from the authors and dramaturges who were researching and writing the screenplays. Even though the HA K had worked on other television series before, *Polizeiruf 110* represented a major change in the volume and pace of work. This becomes clear through comparison with *Blaulicht*: Deutscher Fernsehfunk had produced twenty-nine episodes in ten years, and the screenplays had all been written by the same author, Günter Prödohl. The first ten episodes of *Polizeiruf* were written by eight different authors, and the Ministry – perhaps with a touch of exaggeration – reported that twenty or even thirty authors were writing for the

¹⁶ Abt. Presse/Information, 'Leitfaden für die Aussprache', 24 November 1971, BArch DO1 05.0/43165.

¹⁷ Guder, *Genosse Hauptmann auf Verbrecherjagd*, pp. 162-3.

series.¹⁸ A member of the HA K vividly described the impact of this activity on his department's workload:

Diese Autoren benötigen ständig Stoff. Es erfolgen täglich Anrufe der Dramaturgen, die die betreffenden Autoren betreuen. Sie bitten um Vermittlung an unsere Konsultationspartner in Berlin und Potsdam. Daraus ergibt sich zwangsläufig eine enorme Belastung der betreffenden Konsultationspartner. Die zeigt sich in Gesprächen, welche in der Regel 2 bis 3 Stunden dauern, Einsichtnahme in Vorgänge, in Exposés usw. Daraus ergibt sich auch eine zusätzliche Belastung der HA K. Denn dieser große Kreis von Autoren ist auf die Dauer mit Stoff nicht zu befriedigen.¹⁹

The substantial increase in the HA K's workload raises the question of whether the dramaturges really were just being intentionally obstructive, as the Abteilung Presse/Information suspected, or whether they were similarly overwhelmed by the task of coordinating so many new writers and increasing production.

The Abteilung Presse/Information was even concerned that the sheer volume of work might jeopardize the whole undertaking. Its records alert us to tensions between departments within the Ministry that have previously gone unnoticed. One official asked, '[s]ehen alle

¹⁸ HA K, 'Vermerk', 2 February 1972, BArch DO1 05.0/34166; Abt. Presse/Information, 'Information über die gegenwärtige Lage', 18 February 1972, BArch DO1 05.0/34166. For a list of all the GDR episodes of *Polizeiruf 110* and other crime television series, see Guder, *Genosse Hauptmann auf Verbrecherjagd*, pp. xix-lvi.

¹⁹ HA K, 'Vermerk', 2 February 1972, BArch DO1 05.0/34166.

Mitarbeiter der HA Kriminalpolizei diesen politischen Zusammenhang oder betrachten sie die tatsächliche Mehrarbeit als unnötige Belastung?’²⁰ Other documents show that the Abteilung Presse/Information was urging all sections of the Ministry to improve the quality and quantity of their public engagement via the media, in line with the resolutions of the Eighth Party Conference. The Abteilung Presse/Information was critical of the work that the HA K had carried out so far, arguing, ‘[d]er Leiter, seine Stellvertreter und die Abteilungsleiter müssen allen Mitarbeitern *vordemonstrieren*, daß die Öffentlichkeitsarbeit [...] kein unliebsames Anhängsel ist, Mehrarbeit bedeutet usw.’²¹ In this case, the writer was not even willing to concede that public engagement did mean more work. The department was particularly critical of the HA K’s use of radio:

Hier muß die Hauptabteilung Kriminalpolizei einen großen Schritt nach vorn machen, hier ist echter Nachholbedarf vorhanden [...], hier müssen die Erfahrungen der Hauptabteilungen Verkehrspolizei und Feuerwehr ohne Abstriche schnell aufgegriffen werden.²²

This contextual information explains the apparent tension between the two departments within the Ministry: the increased workload from *Polizeiruf 110* came at a time when the HA K was already under pressure to divert more time and resources to public engagement, not just via television.

²⁰ Abt. Presse/Information, ‘Leitfaden für die Aussprache’, 24 November 1971, BArch DO1 05.0/43165.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

These sources demonstrate that a basis for collaboration between the television dramaturges and the HA K had to be constructed, and resources needed to be provided. The chief dramaturge was replaced by Hans-Jürgen Faschina, who had served as dramaturge for crime series such as *Drei von der K* and *Zollfahndung*, as well as for four of the first five *Polizeiruf* episodes. The HA K formally approved the concept for the series, and – after a nine-month delay – it provided named ‘Konsultationspartner’ for each dramaturge.²³ This much is clear from Guder’s research, but it is also important to note the efforts that the HA K made to improve the interpersonal relations between the two departments. On 11 October 1972, the head of the HA K invited the dramaturges to mark the production of the first ten episodes with a ‘feierliche Zusammenkunft’ in the Hotel Stadt Berlin.²⁴ This was East Berlin’s most modern hotel, a newly built skyscraper that still dominates Alexanderplatz today. This social event was followed in January 1974 by an away day that the HA K organized at the Ministry of the Interior’s lakeside country retreat in Groß-Köris, Brandenburg. The plan was to have a three-hour discussion over ‘Kaffee und Kuchen’, followed by dinner.²⁵ There are no minutes of the discussion, but we do have the menu and costings that the Ministry’s catering team prepared for the event: the participants – five representatives of the Ministry, six representatives of Fernsehen der DDR (as Deutscher

²³ HA K, ‘Aktenvermerk’, 7 March 1973, BArch DO1 05.0/43167. HA-Leiter *Polizeiruf 110* to Gen. Oberst D., HA K, 14 December 1972 and 22 March 1973; D., Leiter der HA K, to HA-Leiter *Polizeiruf 110*, 18 September 1973, all in Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (henceforth DRA) 42: Schriftverkehr MdI 1971-30.6.78.

²⁴ Letter from N., HA K, to F., 2 October 1972, DRA 42: Schriftverkehr MdI 1971-1978.

²⁵ HA K, ‘Konzeption zum Ablauf der Veranstaltung in Groß-Köris, 10.1.1974’, 8 January 1974, BArch DO1 05.0/43167.

Fernsehfunk had been renamed), and one screenwriter – were to be treated to a slice of strawberry tart and a profiterole with their coffee, and they were to have the opportunity to help themselves to fruit, cigarettes, non-alcoholic drinks, and cognac during the discussion. The participants could then look forward to a four-course meal, with soljanka, eel in herb sauce, haunch of venison and beef with vegetables, chips, potato croquettes, and boiled potatoes, followed by ice-cream. Each course was to be accompanied by a different alcoholic drink, and the meal was to be rounded off with coffee and vodka. Thirty bottles of beer were also to be provided.²⁶ Whilst the Ministry files do not prove that the catering went ahead as planned, the costings do offer a glimpse into the relationship between cultural-political collaboration and sociability. The invitation shows that the HA K was inviting the dramaturges onto privileged territory, and that its catering team planned to treat them with some style. The attempt to foster a sense of common purpose, of being on the same side, and of being part of a privileged relationship, is clear.

Constructing the socialist *Rechtsstaat*

What was it that enabled the HA K and the dramaturges of *Polizeiruf 110* to create the basis for a successful partnership? First and foremost, both partners needed what the other – and only the other – could provide. Any television series that attempts to depict the work of a particular profession, whether a police force or a medical team, needs specialist advisors if it is to create a version that viewers will accept as authentic. The dramaturges and screenwriters of *Polizeiruf 110* needed material on criminal cases, and they needed expert insight into police procedures and forensics. Directors and television crews

²⁶ HA K, 'Kostenvoranschlag. Betr.: Zusammenkunft im Gästehaus des Ministers des Innern', 8 January 1974, BArch DO1 05.0/43167.

depended on the logistical help of the police to cordon off streets, film in police stations, procure uniforms, borrow the police helicopter or police cars, or draft in police officers as extras. The HA K had an equally strong incentive to collaborate, for the series was a key instrument in its crime prevention and public engagement strategy, a strategy that it was under pressure to improve. The records in the Bundesarchiv indicate that police strategists had been concerned for some time that reports about the falling crime rate might be impeding their efforts to reduce crime. In 1966 one spokesperson even argued that press reports had lulled the population into a false sense of security, adding, ‘[i]ch möchte hier offen sagen, daß uns das nicht gefällt.’²⁷ Whereas the GDR media tended to brush delicate issues under the carpet, the HA K actually encouraged dramaturges to feature crimes such as alcohol-related crime, repeat offending, and juvenile crime in *Polizeiruf 110*.²⁸

The HA K and Abteilung Presse/Information also treated *Polizeiruf 110* as an opportunity to strengthen public confidence in the police and, by extension, the state authorities. The archived correspondence shows the very close attention that the HA K paid to successive versions of the title sequence. In a letter to the chief dramaturge Lothar Dutombé, who had succeeded Faschina by January 1975, the head of the HA K presented his department’s ideas for a montage of shots. One idea reads: ‘alle vier Kriminalisten entfernen sich auf einem Betriebsgelände von einer Gruppe Arbeitern, die ihnen freundlich

²⁷ ‘Meine Damen und Herren! Auf der Tagesordnung unserer heutigen Beratung stehen zwei gewichtige Probleme...’, [c. 1966], BArch DO1 0.5.0/41543.

²⁸ See for example HA K, ‘Konzeption für die Form und inhaltliche Ausgestaltung der Kriminalserie *Blaulicht*’, 4 January 1971, BArch DO1 05.0/43165. Despite the reference to *Blaulicht*, the content of the document makes it clear that the planned series under discussion is the one that became known as *Polizeiruf 110*.

nachwinken'.²⁹ Whilst no such image made the final cut, the different versions of the title sequence foreground the solidarity of the police, their deadly efficiency, all-seeing vision, and technological superiority (see published article for Figs 1-4). Police advisors were quick to correct aspects in the screenplays that threatened to contradict their image of the GDR as a 'Rechtsstaat', a state governed by the rule of law. In 1988, for example, the assessor of *Der Maler seines Lebens* noted that there were no legal grounds for the house search depicted in the screenplay.³⁰ Advisors ensured that any terms that were associated with a surveillance state were replaced with neutral terms, so in 1973, for example, an assessor objected to the use of 'Verhör' instead of 'Befragung' or 'Vernehmung', and in 1984 an advisor instructed that 'Überwachungsbericht' should be changed to 'Ermittlungsbericht'.³¹ These comments demonstrate how police advisors strove to protect the image of the Volkspolizei from contamination by knowledge of practices associated above all with the Ministry for State Security, or Stasi. Given that the Stasi was expanding and increasing its control in the 1970s, to the point at which, as Thomas Lindenberger argues, it functioned as a competing police institution,³² it is highly significant that *Polizeiruf 110* presents the police as having sole

²⁹ Leiter der HA K to Leiter der HA Polizeiruf/Staatsanwalt, 13 October 1976, DRA 42.

³⁰ HA K, 'Meinungsäußerung zum Szenarium *Der Maler seines Lebens* aus der Reihe *Polizeiruf 110*', DRA 47: Einschätzungen des MdI ab 1.1.1986.

³¹ HA K, 'Meinungsäußerung zum Szenarium *Minol* von R. Böhm', 16 November 1973; HA K, 'Meinungsäußerung zum Szenarium *Verlockung* von Gunter Friedrich', 18 September 1984. Both in DRA 48: Einschätzungen des MdI bis 31.12.85.

³² Thomas Lindenberger, 'Creating State Socialist Governance: The Case of the Deutsche Volkspolizei', in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*,

authority over law and order. This presentation of the GDR as a *Rechtsstaat* went hand-in-hand with an understanding of crime that would have passed as normative in a Western democratic society: the series focused on crimes such as murder, theft, fraud, arson, or burglary, not on politically motivated acts that were also defined as crimes by the GDR statutes, such as attempts to flee the GDR or incite opposition to the state authorities. When an episode featured rumours that a missing individual had fled the GDR, it was revealed that these rumours had been spread by his murderer.³³

The examples cited above are taken from assessments written by police advisors at different points in the production process, from the initial outline to the scenario and screenplay. Advisors from the HA K, Abteilung Presse/Information, and sometimes the Politische Verwaltung also attended an internal preview of each episode and produced a short report. These assessments were standard practice in GDR cultural production, and their authors' task was not simply to find fault with the product but to assess whether and how it might be improved, and whether they were prepared to make a positive endorsement. The assessments by police advisors made only very occasional references to decisions taken by the Politbüro or statements by Honecker,³⁴ and they contain virtually no references to Marxist-Leninist theory. This does not mean, though, that their rhetoric was not ideologically inflected. Assessors emphasized the 'Schlagkraft der Deutschen Volkspolizei' and commented on whether the films strengthened 'das enge Vertrauensverhältnis zwischen

ed. by Konrad H. Jarausch, trans. by Eve Duffy (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2004), pp. 125-41 (p. 127).

³³ HA K, 'Meinungsäußerung zum Szenarium *Kunstdiebstahl* von C. U. Wiesner', 6 September 1979, DRA 48.

³⁴ See e.g. W., Oberst der K, to K., 16 April 1987, DRA 47.

Bürger und Staat’.³⁵ One of the key rhetorical framing devices is the phrase ‘aus fachlich-politischer Sicht’.³⁶ It shows that assessors claimed the right to intervene and require changes to the depiction of forensics, police procedure, and also – it is here that the specific GDR inflection emerges most clearly – politics. The HA K intervened to change aspects that might undermine public efforts to combat crime, correcting lines in which detectives were dismissive about the contributions of the public to their investigation, or which suggested that people might suffer harm as a result of trying to prevent crime. As the assessor of the scenario for an episode entitled *Beziehungen* put it: ‘Die Getötete hat kriminelle Handlungen unterbinden wollen und muß das mit dem Leben bezahlen. Ein solches Beispiel ist [...] nicht geeignet, die Bürger zum aktiven Handeln gegen Gesetzesverletzungen anzuregen.’³⁷ When it came to the presentation of criminals, the HA K’s attitude was relatively nuanced: the aim was not simply to mobilize the public against the criminal ‘other’ – after all, this was an ‘other’ that had emerged from within the GDR. Rather, the aim was to explore why people in the GDR turned to crime, and to show how small misdemeanours could spiral out of control. Police advisors were keen to provide a route to social reintegration, particularly for criminals who had paid their debt to society, or for socially disaffected individuals who had been wrongfully suspected of crime and cleared by the police.

³⁵ Leiter der HA K to Leiter der HA Polizeiruf/Staatsanwalt, 13 October 1976, DRA 42; N., Oberstleutnant der K, to D., 18 January 1979, DRA 48; ‘Meinungsäußerung zum Planangebot des Fernsehens der DDR 1980/81’, DRA 48.

³⁶ See e.g. HA K, ‘Meinungsäußerung zum Szenarium *Der Tod des Pelikans*’, sent to the HA Polizeiruf/Staatsanwalt on 30 January 1989, DRA 47.

³⁷ HA K, ‘Meinungsäußerung zum Szenarium *Beziehungen* von Regina Weicker’, 1 March 1982, DRA 48.

The police did intervene though to prevent the inclusion of material that might give criminals new ideas, such as blackmailing a town with threats to use stolen poison to contaminate the water supply.³⁸ They warned that care should be taken while filming car thefts in *Walzer zu Dritt*, in order to avoid encouraging copycat crimes.³⁹ They also intervened to adjust the depiction of the economic situation, telling dramaturges to avoid references to goods being in short supply, as this might suggest that the economic situation in the GDR was contributing to crime.⁴⁰ It was in the economic and social sphere that police advisors went beyond a concern for the image of the Volkspolizei and interpreted crime prevention in a very broad sense, identifying opportunities to highlight the GDR's maternity leave provision, positive treatment of old-age pensioners, and workers' access to health resorts.⁴¹ There is no suggestion that the dramaturges resisted these politically motivated changes. It helped here that the dramaturges were themselves mediators, and had not written the screenplays. As readers, both they and the police advisors were functioning as a political and ideological safety net.

It was very rare for episodes to be made and not broadcast, not least given the costs incurred during film shoots that could take months. Sometimes assessors rejected suggestions for episodes, only for the episode to be made years later after all. In 1978, for instance, one

³⁸ HA K, 'Meinungsäußerung zum Drehbuch *Blütenstaub* aus der Reihe *Polizeiruf 110*', 9 June 1972, DRA 48.

³⁹ Letter from B., Major der K, to S., 18 March 1977, DRA 48.

⁴⁰ HA K, 'Beziehungen', 1 March 1982, DRA 48.

⁴¹ HA K, 'Meinungsäußerung zum Szenarium *Die Entführung*', December 1986, DRA 47; HA K, 'Meinungsäußerung zum Drehbuch *Oma Hinze* von Gabriele Müller' [1982], DRA 48; letter from W., HA K, to K., 27 January 1987, DRA 47.

assessor argued that *Der Einstieg* was ‘interessant und machbar’, whereas the Ministry decided in January 1979 that it could not agree to filming – only for the film to be made in 1987 under the new title *Unheil aus der Flasche*.⁴² In the GDR literary sphere, Simone Barck has noted that a variety of voices played a part in attempts to gain permission for publication,⁴³ and the example of *Der Einstieg* points to a similar polyphony in the production of *Polizeiruf 110*. Comparison of assessments with finished episodes indicates that not all of the assessors’ corrections were implemented. The broadcast episode *Blütenstaub*, for example, included the insult ‘Produktionskuli’, which the police assessor had deemed ‘politisch nicht vertretbar’, and a small tracker device was placed in a plastic container along with the ransom, even though the assessor had said that this did not correspond to the way in which the police actually used technology.⁴⁴ Such examples do not necessarily amount to evidence of counter-censorship strategies on the part of the television dramaturges, screenwriters, and directors; rather, they tell us something about the status of the police assessments in the production process. They represented one view, a view that

⁴² St. to D., 11 January 1979; N., Oberstleutnant der K, to D., 18 January 1979. Both in DRA 48.

⁴³ Simone Barck, ‘Nachbemerkung’, in *Jedes Buch ein Abenteuer: Zensur-System und literarische Öffentlichkeiten in der DDR bis Ende der sechziger Jahre*, ed. by Simone Barck, Martina Langermann, and Siegfried Lokatis (Berlin: Akademie, 1997), p. 433.

⁴⁴ HA K, ‘Meinungsäußerung zum Drehbuch *Blütenstaub*’, 9 June 1972, DRA 48. See also *Blütenstaub*, dir. Gerhard Respondek (Fernsehen der DDR, first broadcast on 22 October 1972), at 00:34:50 and 00:37:30. This is available on DVD on *Polizeiruf 110 1971-1972*, DDR TV-Archiv, ASIN B007EAGD78.

needed to be taken into account and engaged with, but which did not dictate every aspect of the final outcome.

Rituals of sociability: performing cooperation

We have already seen how the ‘feierliche Zusammenkunft’ and socialist away day in 1972 and 1974 were used to mark and cement the new partnership between the HA K and the television dramaturges working on *Polizeiruf 110*. These events symbolically marked a shift from the initial atmosphere of mistrust to an economy of rituals and rewards, designed to demonstrate the value that both parties attached to the partnership and their shared commitment to socialism. This development has not received any critical attention and, as in the case of the two social events, the HA K seems to have taken the initiative. In March 1973, the HA K asked Faschina to provide the names of workers from Fernsehen der DDR who could be presented with awards from the Ministry.⁴⁵ In November of the same year, Faschina returned the favour, asking the HA K to nominate police advisors for awards in the television industry.⁴⁶ The practice of soliciting nominations from partner institutions highlights the symbolic function of the awards: the HA K wanted to make awards to television producers, but it had no strong view on which individuals should receive them. These initiatives soon evolved into more regular rituals: television dramaturges sent police advisors letters of congratulation each year on their *Ehrentag*, the *Tag der Deutschen Volkspolizei*, or at New Year, or when police advisors were awarded medals for their professional service. In 1988, the HA K even presented each of the dramaturges with a clock as a Christmas gift. In his

⁴⁵ HA K, ‘Aktenvermerk’, 7 March 1973, BArch DO1 05.0/43167.

⁴⁶ HA K, ‘Niederschrift über die Aussprache mit den Mitarbeitern des Fernsehens der DDR’, 18 December 1973, BArch DO1 05.0/43167.

letter of thanks, the chief dramaturge assured the head of the HA K, '[w]ir [...] werden uns bemühen, mit ihnen 1989 immer richtig in der Zeit zu sein; aufgeladen sind wir dazu wie die fünf Batterien.'⁴⁷

The function of these – mostly discursive – rituals was to perform and reinforce a sense of common political and ideological purpose. In his groundbreaking study of GDR culture, David Bathrick explores how authors were simultaneously agents and objects of power relationships, and how texts and discourses were involved in processes of transformation within a changing social order.⁴⁸ The role that discursive rituals played in work-related communication in the GDR merits more attention in this respect than it has hitherto received. The following extracts from letters of congratulation show how television dramaturges calibrated socialist discourse according to their addressees. The first example is taken from a letter from the chief dramaturge to the Deputy Minister of the Interior. It is highly formal, acknowledging the Deputy Minister's status in the hierarchy, and reflecting the fact that the two men were not working together on a regular basis:

Sehr geehrter Genosse General!

Gestatten Sie mir bitte, Ihnen, den Offizieren und Wachtmeistern des Ministeriums im Namen unseres Schöpferkollektives allerherzlichst zum Jahrestag der Deutschen Volkspolizei zu gratulieren.

⁴⁷ K. to Leiter der HA K, 2 January 1989, DRA 43: Schriftverkehr MdI ab 1.7.78.

⁴⁸ David Bathrick, *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 15.

Gleichzeitig nehmen wir die Gelegenheit wahr, uns für die Zusammenarbeit im vergangenen Jahr zu bedanken. Die große Unterstützung, die Sie und Ihre Genossen, vor allen Dingen die Hauptabteilung Kriminalpolizei, uns stets gegeben haben, wird uns weiterhin Ansporn sein, unseren Teil zur Erfüllung Ihrer großen Aufgaben beizutragen.⁴⁹

In these opening paragraphs, the chief dramaturge adopts a position in the system of power, presenting his department as the grateful recipient of the Ministry's support and acknowledging the superior importance of the Ministry's work.⁵⁰ We see a similar acknowledgement of the Ministry's responsibilities in a letter that the deputy chief dramaturge wrote on the same day to Gen. Major Horst B., his regular consultation partner. The tone of the letter, however, is considerably less formal:

Lieber Horst!

Zum Tag der Deutschen Volkspolizei möchte ich Dir für die fruchtbare

⁴⁹ Leiter der Chefdramaturgie Polizeiruf/Staatsanwalt to Stellvertreter des Ministers des Innern, 28 June 1978, DRA 42.

⁵⁰ Referring to conferences with community police officers (*Abschnittsbevollmächtigte* or ABV), Lindenberger comments that 'Such regular and protracted rituals of participation of people in subaltern positions can be regarded as one of the key features of the practice of state socialist domination.' Lindenberger, 'Creating State Socialist Governance', p. 137.

Zusammenarbeit im zurückliegenden Arbeitsabschnitt recht herzlich danken und
Dir in Deiner verantwortlichen Tätigkeit weitere große Erfolge wünschen.⁵¹

Here the personal ‘Lieber Horst’ and ‘recht herzlich danken’ occur alongside the tropes of socialist collaboration, ‘die fruchtbare Zusammenarbeit’ and the reference to the police advisor’s ‘verantwortliche Tätigkeit’. This mixture of the personal and the formulaic reflected the fact that the deputy chief dramaturge had already been encouraging a more informal, friendly tone in his communications with B. In a letter written just a few months earlier, the dramaturge had said that he hoped B. and his family would receive many Easter eggs. He seems to have made the political equivalent of a Freudian slip here, as what he actually wished B. was ‘eine staatliche [instead of ‘stattliche’] Anzahl von prallgefüllten Ostereiern’.⁵² A month later, B. sent the dramaturge his opinion on a screenplay and added: ‘Für Deine Wünsche hinsichtlich der Ostereier danke ich Dir, sie sind erfüllt worden.’⁵³

The formulaic nature of these communicative rituals means that we can read modulations in them as an index to changes in relationships, the state of the collaboration, and the seriousness with which the participants regarded socialist rituals. By 1986, the aforementioned dramaturge had been working with B. for at least ten years, and he simply tacked his belated congratulations on to the end of a letter: ‘Nachträglich zu Eurem Ehrentag alles Gute und vielen Dank für Deine Unterstützung.’⁵⁴ Compared with the letters sent in 1978, we see a shift away from acknowledging the value of the political occasion, towards

⁵¹ S. to Gen. Major B., 28 June 1978, DRA 42.

⁵² [S.] to Gen. Major [B.], 23 March 1978, DRA 42.

⁵³ Horst [B.] to [S.], 28 April 1978, DRA 48.

⁵⁴ [S.] to Gen. Oberstleutnant B., 14 July 1986, DRA 47.

simply expressing thanks and appreciation in language couched almost exclusively in personal terms. The fact that the dramaturge's congratulations were belated only underlines the decline in the strictness with which he observed the ritual in his dealings with B. We find similar evidence of informality in the letters sent by the Offizier für Öffentlichkeitsarbeit: she signed her letters 'Viele Grüße' rather than 'Mit sozialistischem Gruss', even though she was a Party member addressing fellow Party members.⁵⁵ Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Sara Jones has analysed the way in which GDR writers and publishers deployed discursive tropes with a knowledge of their value in their sector of the GDR linguistic market.⁵⁶ Following this approach, we can say here that the decision to deploy socialist formulae in some communications, but not in others, points to a partial erosion of the perceived value of this currency.

Other variations in ritualized expressions alert us to periodic tensions in the relationship. The Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv contains the edited draft of a letter from the chief dramaturge to the deputy head of the HA K, dated December 1982. The letter expresses the customary gratitude for the time that the officer has given, despite his many important responsibilities, and for the understanding he has shown. Yet the brackets drawn in pencil around some statements suggests that the tone of the enthusiasm was to be tempered: brackets have been pencilled in around 'Es ist gut, daß wir wieder mit Dir arbeiten können!' and around the word 'ständiges' in the sentence 'Lieber Heinz, gestatte mir, daß ich mich noch einmal persönlich bei Dir bedanke für Dein (ständiges) Verständnis, das Du dem *Polizeiruf*

⁵⁵ W. to L., 26 January 1983, DRA 43.

⁵⁶ Sara Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism: Negotiating Space in the GDR Literary Sphere*, Interdisciplinary German Cultural Studies, 10 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2011), p. 39.

110 freundschaftlich entgegenbringst.’⁵⁷ The clue to the reason for these changes comes in the next sentence, which has also been bracketed in pencil: ‘Wir glauben, daß wir dabei sind, die Krise zu überwinden, die uns im vergangenen Jahr viel Kummer gemacht hat.’ A report by a local police officer in the Bundesarchiv alleges that in early 1983 a film director and his producer had described the relationship between the television dramaturges and the HA K as ‘derzeit getrübt’.⁵⁸ The letters from 1984 ring similar alarm bells: here the chief dramaturge characterizes the past year as ‘streitbar’, and one of his colleagues describes it as ‘ein schweres Jahr’, an allusion to the title of a recent *Polizeiruf* film which depicted the investigation of crimes committed in the immediate post-war period.⁵⁹ There had been serious doubts in 1984 about whether this film – a major two-part production – would be broadcast, and further cuts were made three months after the *Endabnahme*, before the episodes were finally broadcast.⁶⁰ These letters show that subtle variations in ritualized expressions function as a weathervane for the state of the collaborative relationship, suggesting that they also merit investigation in other areas of GDR cultural production.

What we also find is that references to the joint ownership of the series emerge in the police assessments and the correspondence between the HA K and the television

⁵⁷ Letter from D. to N., Stellvertreter des Leiters der HA K, 15 December 1982, DRA 43.

⁵⁸ Volkspolizei Kreisamt Gera, ‘Bericht zur Polizeiruf-Produktion des Fernsehens der DDR, Arbeitstitel *Der Freund*’, 16 March 1983, BArch DO1 05.0/51115. The report indicated that this comment was made early in the film shoot, which began on 17 January 1983.

⁵⁹ Letter from D. to N., 27 December 1984; letter from L. to B., 27 December 1984. Both in DRA 43.

⁶⁰ HA K, ‘Standpunkt zu dem Film *Schwere Jahre* aus der Reihe *Polizeiruf 110*’, 28 February 1984, DRA 48; Brück et al., *Der deutsche Fernsehkrimi*, p. 89.

dramaturges. As early as August 1972, a police assessment of *Zahltag* referred to ‘unsere Folgen’, and in January 1989, the chief dramaturge described *Polizeiruf* to the head of the HA K as ‘unsere gemeinsame Reihe’.⁶¹ There is a strong rhetorical dimension to this, as Werner Krecek argued when I interviewed him. But the assessments of screenplays do show police advisors flexing their dramaturgical muscles, commenting critically on style, plot, and characterization, only then to signal their respect for the dramaturges’ territory by distinguishing between these aspects and the correct depiction of police matters.⁶² The HA K’s Offizier für Öffentlichkeitsarbeit even wrote the scenario for an episode that was subsequently filmed and broadcast, drawing on her experience as an author of published crime fiction. This officer’s sense of co-ownership of the series is clear from her reaction when a police detective from a local unit submitted a draft screenplay. She and the television dramaturges agreed that the manuscript was not up to the high standard of *Polizeiruf*.⁶³ The correspondence shows the officer and the dramaturges operating as joint gatekeepers of the series, on the same level, above the local police detective. Indeed, the officer was particularly dismissive of the police detective’s efforts, referring to them as a ‘manuscript’ only in inverted commas.⁶⁴ In other cases, we find police assessors functioning as guardians of the genre, insisting that episodes were not suitable for *Polizeiruf 110* but that they could be

⁶¹ HA K, ‘Betr.: Meinungsäußerung zum Szenarium *Zahltag* von Heiner Rank’, 28 August 1972, DRA 48; K. to N., 2 January 1989, DRA 43.

⁶² See e.g. HA K, ‘Meinungsäußerung zum Szenarium *Mitschuld*’, DRA 48; B. to S., 30 October 1978, DRA 43.

⁶³ W. to L., 26 January 1983; G. to Genossin Oberstleutnant W., 1 March 1983. Both in DRA 43.

⁶⁴ W. to L., 26 January 1983, DRA 43.

stripped of their links to the series and broadcast separately – as some indeed were.⁶⁵ These assessors conceived of the selection process at least in part as a positive activity: inclusion in the series demonstrated not just that an episode gave no reason for concern, but that it was worthy of receiving the endorsement of the *Polizeiruf* brand.⁶⁶

The role of the *Fachberater*

This article has focused so far on the relationship between television dramaturges and their advisors in the HA K, on partnerships that extended over years, even allowing for periodic changes in staffing. What it will examine now is how the collaboration worked between the directors, cast, and crew, and the local or retired police officers (*Fachberater*) who were sent to help them during the film shoot. Each *Fachberater* filed a report to the HA K, and 27 such reports are held in the Bundesarchiv but have not previously been analysed. The reports have their own rhetorical rituals: it is not uncommon for *Fachberater* to cast themselves in the role of patient advisors working with difficult artists, as in the case of the one who wrote, ‘[der Regisseur] war in seiner Persönlichkeit schwer zu nehmen und es bedurfte mitunter eines großen Einfühlungsvermögens, am richtigen Ort und mit dem richtigen Ton entsprechende Hinweise zu erteilen, ohne dabei die seinem Charakter eigene Sensibilität und das

⁶⁵ See the handwritten note entitled ‘betr. 1. Fass.’ attached to the following assessment: Politische Verwaltung, ‘Polizeiruf *Das laute Schweigen*’, 1 July 1983, BArch DO1 05.0/51115.

⁶⁶ This final point echoes Robert Darnton’s analysis of censorship in eighteenth-century France, where publication was seen as an aspect of royal privilege, and censorship amounted to a positive endorsement. See Robert Darnton, ‘Censorship, a Comparative View: France, 1789 – East Germany, 1989’, *Representations*, 49 (1995), 40-60 (pp. 43-44).

Geltungsbedürfnis zu beschneiden.’⁶⁷ In some cases the reports have been annotated by readers in the HA K, allowing us to see which elements were singled out as important and which ones were questioned. The reports thus offer some insight into the way in which the Ministry’s priorities were understood by individuals occupying different positions in its hierarchy.

We find wide variation in the experience of collaboration in these reports, reflecting the fact that the *Fachberater*, cast, and crew had only weeks to establish a relationship; directors would rarely work with the same *Fachberater* more than once.⁶⁸ Mutual benefit and sociability again emerge as key factors. The *Fachberater* tended to file positive reports when they felt that the director and actors had involved them in the production process; we find comments such as ‘Der Fachberater wurde in seiner Eigenschaft anerkannt und respektiert’.⁶⁹ Some *Fachberater* – clearly out to impress the HA K with their achievements – assiduously documented specific changes that they claimed to have made to the film.⁷⁰ Some seem to have developed good relationships with the production team – one was very pleased at being

⁶⁷ BDVP Leipzig, ‘Bericht zur fachlichen Beratung des DDR-Fernsehens für einen Film aus der Reihe *Polizeiruf 110*’, 20 August 1984, BArch DO1 05.0/51115. The name of the episode has been omitted to protect the director’s identity.

⁶⁸ An exception was Kurt Großkopf, who regularly worked as a *Fachberater*.

⁶⁹ BDVP Leipzig, ‘Bericht zur fachlichen Beratung’, 20 August 1984, BArch DO1 05.0/51115.

⁷⁰ Volkspolizei-Kreisamt Karl-Marx-Stadt, ‘Einschätzung zum Einsatz als Fachberater zu den Dreharbeiten bei der DEFA in Babelsberg zum Film *Polizeiruf 110*, Arbeitstitel *Treffen mit Otto* – Filmtitel *Die alte Frau im Lehnstuhl*’, 15 July 1986, BArch DO1 05.0/51115.

allowed to take photographs of the shoot so that he could then use them in a lecture.⁷¹ On other occasions, though, *Fachberater* complained of being treated as dogsbodies, assistants there simply to sort out the logistics, rather than to provide the benefit of their expertise. One claimed that the director had shouted at him ‘in einem regelrechten Wutausbruch [...], daß ich ihm ausschließlich die Bereitstellung von VP-Fahrzeugen und Volkspolizisten als Statisten und Kleindarsteller zu organisieren hätte und ihm zu diesem Zweck “unterstellt” sei’.⁷² He was not the only *Fachberater* to report similar problems with this director and his team; another wrote: ‘Die ausgeprägte Eigenwilligkeit des Regisseurs kommt u. a. zum Ausdruck, daß er von sich und seinen Entschlüssen derart überzeugt ist, indem er den Fachberater als “Informant” und nicht als Partner ansieht.’⁷³ This allusion to surveillance reminds us of the initial difficulties that the Ministry and dramaturges had in establishing collaboration amidst suspicions of censorship and its evasion. The member of the HA K who read the report highlighted the sentence, underlining the key terms and making a note to take the example into account when briefing the head of the HA K for a conversation with the

⁷¹ Volkspolizeikreisamt Rostock, ‘Bericht zur Fachberatung des Kriminalfilms *Freunde* aus der Reihe *Polizeiruf 110* beim Fernsehen der DDR, Bereich Dramatische Kunst’, 12 March 1984, BArch DO1 05.0/51115.

⁷² Volkspolizeikreisamt Jena, ‘Protokoll zur Teilnahme eines Fachberaters an den Dreharbeiten zu dem Fernsehfilm [...] aus der Sendereihe des Fernsehens der DDR *Polizeiruf 110*’, 14 October 1985, BArch DO1 05.0/51115. In this and the next example, the names of the films have been omitted to protect the identity of their directors.

⁷³ Volkspolizei-Kreisamt Karl-Marx-Stadt, ‘Einschätzung zum Einsatz als Fachberater zu den Dreharbeiten beim DDR-Fernsehen zum Film *Polizeiruf 110*’, 22 April 1985, BArch DO1 05.0/51115.

chief dramaturge. In this case, the director's suspicions may have been well founded, as the decision was taken not to broadcast the film.

Whilst the *Fachberater* above insisted on his official status as a 'partner' rather than an informant, it is clear from the reports that many *Fachberater* did see themselves as censorial agents and embedded informants. They often provided assessments of the political reliability of the director, cast, and crew; for example, on 14 October 1985 a *Fachberater* in Jena wrote:

Dieses Verhältnis [his own with the director] wurde wesentlich mit dadurch bestimmt, daß der Regisseur in Gesprächen mit Schauspielern und Mitgliedern des Filmstabes mehrfach negative Ansichten über die Arbeit der Deutschen Volkspolizei, insbesondere der Verkehrspolizei äußerte, vielfach 'Mängeldiskussionen' führte und bei auftretenden Schwierigkeiten während der Dreharbeiten überreagierte.⁷⁴

The advisors' reports, and the marginal comments by readers in the HA K, reveal divergences in the understandings of power and control that were in play, especially over whether the Ministry had the final say over whether an episode would be broadcast. In 1984, for instance, one *Fachberater* reported: 'In einem Fall wurde [der Regisseur] durch den Fachberater darauf aufmerksam gemacht, daß letztlich das MdI die Aufführung seines Streifens genehmigt.'⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Volkspolizeikreisamt Jena, 'Protokoll zur Teilnahme', 14 October 1985, BArch DO1 05.0/51115.

⁷⁵ BDVP Leipzig, 'Bericht zur fachlichen Beratung', 20 August 1984, BArch DO1 05.0/51115.

What is interesting is that a reader of the report (which was sent to two members of the HA K) put a squiggly line under the word ‘genehmigt’ and added a question mark above it.

Did the *Fachberater* therefore think that the Ministry and its HA K had more power over the series than they actually did? In some ways, no: the HA K did reserve the right to turn down screenplays and occasionally reject authors; in 1978, the deputy head of the department turned down an exposé by the author Erich Loest.⁷⁶ It was not at all uncommon for police assessments to include the phrase ‘[einer Sache] kann nicht zugestimmt werden’.⁷⁷ But whereas the verb ‘genehmigen’ as used by the *Fachberater* advertises the superior authority of the body granting or withholding permission, the use of ‘zustimmen’ by the HA K suggests a more equal partnership. Furthermore, police assessors almost invariably couched such phrases in the form ‘der vorliegenden Fassung kann nicht zugestimmt werden’, leaving room for negotiation and compromise.⁷⁸ So it would be more accurate to say that the HA K – mindful of its long-term relationship with the dramaturges – was extremely careful to avoid demonstrating hierarchical power in its communications with them. For their part,

⁷⁶ Oberst N. to D., 17 March 1978, DRA 42. Loest had been imprisoned on political grounds from 1957 until 1964, but after his release he succeeded in publishing novels and short stories, including popular crime fiction written under the pseudonym Hans Walldorf. Even so, he continued to experience censorship and resigned from the Writers’ Union in 1979 in protest against the banned republication of his novel *Es geht seinen Gang oder Mühen in unserer Ebene* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1977).

⁷⁷ See e.g. W., Oberst der K, to D., 2 September 1985, DRA 48; W. to K., 17 January 1986, DRA 47. The films in question were *Gier* by Hans Knötzsch and *Der 72-Stunden-Dienst* by Ulrich Frohriep, and both were produced and broadcast in 1986.

⁷⁸ W. to K., 17 January 1986, DRA 47.

successive chief dramaturges worked to preserve the relationship of trust. When the television department ignored police advice to change the underlying premise of one episode, the chief dramaturge flagged this up to the HA K:

Ich hatte das in meinem [*sic*] beiden Schreiben an Sie schon begründet, teile es aber ausdrücklich noch einmal mit, damit der Tatsache, daß wir hier unterschiedliche Meinungen haben, überhaupt kein Anflug von Geheimniskrämerei anhaftet. Ich bleibe in diesem Fall bei meiner dargelegten Grundhaltung, von deren Richtigkeit ich hoffe, Sie bereits zur Rohschnittabnahme überzeugen zu können.⁷⁹

Both partners were being careful to manage disagreements so that the spectre of overt censorship, exercised by the HA K against the will of the dramaturges, did not arise.

This impression is confirmed by the negotiations over an episode broadcast in April 1983 under the title *Es ist nicht immer Sonnenschein*. The episode focused on antisocial behaviour, and at the internal preview in January 1983, the representatives of the Ministry objected to two aspects in particular. The first was a scene outside an overcrowded disco, with a crowd of young people outside wanting to be allowed in. Two of the three youths at the centre of the episode throw stones, smashing windows, and when two police cars arrive on the scene the youths jeer. As the Ministry pointed out, ‘Mit der Darstellung solchen Verhaltens der Jugendlichen vor der Gaststätte bei Eintreffen der Deutschen Volkspolizei

⁷⁹ K. to Gen. Oberst W., 3 February 1988, DRA 43.

wird der Autorität der sozialistischen Staatsmacht nicht entsprochen.’⁸⁰ The Ministry also objected to the behaviour of the son of the ABV, a community police officer, saying that he had no understanding or appreciation of the work of the Volkspolizei. According to the HA K’s account of the preview, the television producers did not share their views:

Die anwesenden, sich zu Wort meldenden Mitarbeiter des Fernsehens äußerten sich positiv zu diesen Szenen. Erstere wurde mit der Realität begründet, in der es noch krasser zuginge. Die zweite wurde als Ausdruck eines offenen und ehrlichen Verhältnisses zwischen Vater und Sohn angesehen, in welchem dieser gleichberechtigt seine Meinung sagen könne.⁸¹

Furthermore, the author and director, Manfred Mosblech, reportedly declared that from an artistic viewpoint he was neither willing nor able to make changes to the film. Faced with this deadlock, the chief dramaturge proposed to discuss the matter with the Deputy Chair of the Staatliches Komitee für Fernsehen, Erich Selbmann, and then to inform the Ministry of the resulting decision.⁸² The chief dramaturge seems to have acted here as a mediator, choosing not to side publicly either with his colleagues or with the Ministry, but referring the decision up the chain of command within the television apparatus. Again, this avoided a confrontation and ensured that any censorship would be an internal matter for Fernsehen der DDR. The episode explains why, as we saw earlier, television workers had reportedly described their

⁸⁰ HA K, ‘Vermerk Filmabnahme *Immer ist nicht Sonnenschein*’, 7 January 1983, BArch DO1 05.0/51115.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

relationship with the Ministry as ‘derzeit getrübt’. In the end, a compromise was struck: the episode was broadcast, but without the shots of young people jeering at the police.⁸³ It was also agreed that the episode would not be shown in the run-up to the ‘Pfingsttreffen’ of the Free German Youth.⁸⁴

Conclusion

The relationship between the Ministerium des Innern and the television dramaturges was always billed as a ‘partnership’, but the terms ‘gesellschaftlicher Partner’ and ‘Konsultationspartner’ initially did little to disguise their mutual suspicions or the dynamics of power and authority in play. The archival records repeatedly demonstrate the difficulty of establishing working relationships in a context of active censorship, whether in the case of the Politische Verwaltung in 1966, the HA K in 1971-2, or the *Fachberater* sent to work with television directors and crews. The awareness that the Ministry could, if it chose, block episodes led to suspicions of censorship and counter-censorship strategies in the early stages of working relationships, when the ground rules for collaboration had yet to be established and when dramaturges and producers seem to have been particularly sensitive to signs that police advisors claimed the right to intervene in artistic matters, as well as criminological ones. Yet this was a relationship in which each institution had a clear practical need of the other: dramaturges and producers needed the HA K’s expertise in criminal cases, forensics,

⁸³ *Es ist nicht immer Sonnenschein*, dir. Manfred Mosblech (Fernsehen der DDR, first broadcast on 17 April 1983), at 00:45:08. Available on DVD at *Polizeiruf 110 1983-1984*, DDR TV-Archiv, ASIN B00BQYE280.

⁸⁴ ‘Protokoll der Endabnahme *Es ist nicht immer Sonnenschein*’, 31 March 1983, cited in Guder, *Genosse Hauptmann auf Verbrecherjagd*, p. 159.

and police procedure, and they needed the logistical assistance of the *Fachberater* during film shoots. The HA K could not afford to pass up the opportunity to take its crime prevention strategy to a mass audience and to court public confidence in, and sympathy for, the Volkspolizei. Whilst its advisors continued to speak frankly in assessments, sometimes issuing devastating verdicts on screenplays, they almost always indicated how the alleged problems might be overcome. The exclusion of the screenwriters from this correspondence meant that the dramaturges could treat criticisms as a normal and necessary step in the working process, and not as an attack on their own activity. The relationship between the HA K and dramaturges came to function through a blend of expertise and control, instruction and negotiation, and it was framed by social and discursive rituals that performed a sense of shared political-ideological purpose and mutual respect. Unlike some of the *Fachberater*, the HA K and television dramaturges learned to take care not to overstep the implied boundaries of their actions, at least in their correspondence. It was thus with a carefully studied modesty, but unmistakable pride, that the HA K's Offizier für Öffentlichkeitsarbeit looked back on the success of the series: 'So können wir als Hauptabteilung K ~~mit Stolz~~ sagen, daß wir einen kleinen Anteil an diesem Erfolg haben.'⁸⁵

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⁸⁵ HA K, Abt. IV Offz. ÖA, 'Thesen für das Gespräch am 17. 1. 74 über den Fortgang der Reihe *Polizeiruf 110*', 10 January 1974, BArch DO1 05.0/43167.

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